

VZCZCXRO3234
PP RUEHAG RUEHDBU RUEHROV
DE RUEHAH #0803/01 2191009
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 071009Z AUG 07
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9139
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 2636
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 0461
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 0496
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0518
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 2206
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0955
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 0250
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1003
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0329
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 0168
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 0217
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 0139
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 0153
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 0178
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 0491
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ2/HSE/CCJ5// PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DHO-2/REA/NMJIC-J2// PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ASHGABAT 000803

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, ECA, EUR/ACE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/07/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [SCUL](#) [KPAO](#) [KDEM](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: "DEVELOP CIVIL SOCIETY" MEANS
"COLOR REVOLUTION"

ASHGABAT 00000803 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Richard E. Hoagland for reasons 1
.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: New Minister of Education Annaamanov appears slightly open to cooperation with the United States. However, his director of the International Department, Nury Bayramov, remains a significant impediment. Foreign Ministry Americas Department Director Bashimov told the Charge explicitly, "Development of civil society means color revolution to us -- we will not permit destabilization." END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) After waiting three weeks for the appointment, Charge finally met on August 3 with Minister of Education Muhammatgeldi Annaamanov. PAO and USAID Country Director accompanied the Charge, and International Department chief Nury Bayromov sat with the Minister. Charge praised the government's recommitment to education, and asked the minister to discuss his priorities for education in Turkmenistan.

"WE'RE DOING IT OUR WAY"

¶3. (SBU) Annaamanov, though reserved at first, because relatively cordial and comparatively open about possible cooperation -- in principle -- with the United States. He explained some of the major reforms under way. He claimed all teachers in the country have already been called to Ashgabat and retrained. He emphasized Turkmenistan wants to send students abroad to study, and noted they are already

going to Russia, Ukraine, China, Malaysia, and Turkey.
(COMMENT: He did not mention any Western European countries
or the United States. END COMMENT.)

14. (SBU) Charge praised the recent presidential directive to recognize foreign degrees and asked how it would be implemented. Annaamanov replied that the government is conducting a national survey to identify citizens with foreign degrees. Charge suggested that a number of international bodies exist that could help Turkmenistan determine degree recognition.

15. (SBU) Charge handed over a brief non-paper listing only the most pressing issues on which we need a reply from the ministry: site approvals for new Peace Corps volunteers; responses to offers of assistance from the Romanowski education delegation; and approval for the full range of educational exchange, Fulbright Senior Specialist, and English-teaching programs.

BAYRAMOV NIGGLES

16. (C) Bayramov pounced and dominated the rest of the meeting, including a long, snickering consultation with the minister while they quickly reviewed the non-paper. Bayramov raised typical, in-the-weeds complaints about existing U.S. programs. For example, he chastised the Peace Corps. "Some volunteers arrive with great enthusiasm. But then they lose their enthusiasm! They go on weekend trips and don't inform us in advance where they're going!" He mostly ignored USAID educational programs and our standard request for better communication with Turkmenistani counterparts.

MINISTER ANNAAMANOV IS CAUTIOUSLY OPEN

ASHGABAT 00000803 002.2 OF 003

17. (C) Despite Bayramov's efforts to drag the discussion into a tit-for-tat argument, Charge returned the discussion to the need for more frequent and more open communication. Minister Annaamanov's occasional interjections suggested a greater concern for making programming successful, rather than support for Bayramov's effort to niggle away at U.S. programs. Referring to Bayramov's recurring concern that the exact dates of FLEX students' departures had to be reported to the ministry by diplomatic note, the minister suggested that knowing their return dates would be valuable so television camera crews could cover their return and education officials could meet them. (COMMENT: This would be a serious break with past government efforts to ignore the FLEX program. END COMMENT.) At one point Annaamanov almost seemed to agree that Bayramov should simply telephone the Charge if he has issues to resolve.

18. (C) COMMENT: This single meeting did not provide any major resolutions to on-going delays from the ministry, but it did reinforce the need for regular, open, mutual communication. In a break with the past, embassy officers observed Annaamanov as a more independent Minister of Education than his predecessors who seemed only to repeat the party line or follow Bayramov's lead. Indeed, it appeared at times Annaamanov gently contradicted the overbearing Bayramov. END COMMENT.

"DEVELOP CIVIL SOCIETY MEANS COLOR REVOLUTION"

19. (C) Immediately after meeting Minister Annaamanov, Charge met with Foreign Ministry Americas Department Director Serdar Bashimov for their weekly working meeting. Charge told Bashimov he had just come from meeting Annaamanov and Bayramov, noting that Annaamanov had made a rather good impression. Full stop. Bashimov laughed and said, "You're a real diplomat. Everyone knows Bayramov is the problem."

110. (C) In the course of other business, Bashimov pulled out the embassy's most recent diplomatic note asking the

government to facilitate a meeting in the port city of Turkmenbashi to present the Local Initiative Small Grants Program, as the Public Affairs Section has already done in Ashgabat, Turkmenabat, Mary, Dashoguz, and Balkanabad. The diplomatic note listed the goals of the grants program under the heading "development of civil society."

¶11. (C) Bashimov said sternly, "We deny your request for this program in Turkmenbashi." He pointed to the phrase "development of civil society" and added, "This is a red flag for us. Civil society in Turkmenistan is at the government level. What you mean by development of civil society is destabilizing. We can't have private citizens leading demonstrations to overthrow the government. 'Develop civil society' means 'color revolution' to us. We will not allow it." Bashimov reiterated, "We really do support all your goals, but you should not ever use the term 'develop civil society.'"

¶12. (C) COMMENT: It is highly unusual for the government outright to deny a U.S. program request. Usually, programs wither from lack of government response. We would speculate either the government has issued a new internal order about "color revolution," or Turkmenbashi for some reason is

ASHGABAT 00000803 003.2 OF 003

considered too sensitive for U.S. programming. We note that the American Corner there is still, after months, awaiting approval to re-open at a new site after the provincial government denied use of the site where it had been located.

¶13. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: We suspect that many in the government are stuck between a rock and a hard place. They may like the new possibilities for cooperation our delegations have been offering in recent months, but they are constrained from acting on a number of our offers by the now accepted wisdom from the Kremlin that the openness of U.S.-style civil society and citizen engagement lead to color revolution. Until we can move past this roadblock, we recommend to strike the term "develop civil society" from all of our conversations and written communications with the government of Turkmenistan. We can still promote all the goals this phrase implies, and talk openly about those specific goals. But if we are to achieve success in the longer term, we need to communicate, for the interim, in a way that doesn't spook the government here. END COMMENT.

HOAGLAND